

A NAYSIS of historians' efforts to explain the coming of the American Civil War reveals a surprising variety of attitudes toward that conflict and toward causation in general. In their methods of dealing with causes, historians fall into three groups. Some explicitly raise and answer questions of "why" and "how." Others, without actually dealing with causes, order their material in sequences in which causation is implicit. Still others eschew all effort at interpretation, perhaps because interpretation is to them wrong, impossible, or perilous; they present the Civil War and its antecedents as "merely chaos floating into chaos," as Charles Beard once described the result of refusal to attempt interpretation of historical facts in itself an interpretation. One can read, for example, eighteen hundred pages of John B. McMaster's cataloguing of information about the three *ante bellum* decades without discovering therein any hint or implication of causality.

Even as they begin their work historians differ widely in their pre-dispositions. Some exhibit a *cocksureness* that brooks no questioning of their possession of all the answers; others display tentativeness and *modesty* sprung from experience with the difficulty of diagnosing human motives and values. Some authors have attained an *impartiality* and detachment that make their frames of reference difficult to determine; others, while professing "objectivity," write with patent though unavowed bias; still others frankly confess their own philosophy and then, within its limits, exhibit fairmindedness that approaches the objectivity of the more exact sciences.

Historians, whatever their predispositions, assign to the Civil War causes ranging from one simple force or phenomenon to patterns so complex and manifold that they include, intricately interwoven, all the important movements, thoughts, and actions of the decades before 1861. One writer finds in events of the immediately preceding years an adequate explanation of the War; another feels he must begin his story with 1831 or even 1820; still another goes back to the importation of the first slaves, to descriptions

of geographic differences before white men appeared, or to differentiation in Europe between those who settled North and South. For instance, John W. Draper treated at length such subjects as geography, the Negro in Africa, colonization of America, the white man in Europe, the Saxon and Norman invasions of England, and the shift from Roman to Gothic architecture; out of 634 pages of his *American Civil War* devoted to the coming of war, 350 pages dealt with these comparatively remote influences. Moral, ideological, political, economic, social, psychological explanations of the War have been offered. Responsibility has been ascribed both to actions of men and to forces beyond human control. Conspiracy, constitutional interpretation, human wickedness, economic interest, divine will, political ambition, climate, "irrepressible conflict," emotion, rival cultures, high moral principles, and chance have severally been accredited with bringing on the War. There is a Marxian interpretation; also a racist theory.

Certain questions confront every historian of the Civil War who does not merely accept and repeat conventional explanations. First, which facts shall he include? Granted that the Civil War was in a broad sense the consequence of forces and events and experiences that include most of American life and thought prior to 1861 and much of antecedent European and human development, still, if one is to interpret at all, he must choose out of all historical data certain facts that he thinks explain or help to explain the coming of the Civil War. This selection, like all interpretation, necessitates making difficult and sometimes arbitrary decisions. It requires drawing chronological lines back of which the influence is too remote to merit inclusion. It means, too, separating out from the immediate past whatever is necessary to understanding the reasons for the War and distinguishing this material from the nonessential, too meagerly pertinent remainder. One must somewhere break the chain in which A is caused by B which is caused by C which is caused by D into infinity and the equally endless sequence whereby A is interrelated with B which affects C which influences D which modifies E among contemporaneous forces or men.

This process of selection and emphasis involves evaluation and thought, which are more difficult than fact collecting. It requires a realization that synthesis often proves merely tentative and hence frequently demands modification as times and techniques and horizons change. Any one author's selection may be questioned by scholars of differing backgrounds. Interpretation is challenging to undertake but full of hazard for the historian's reputation; inherent difficulties make some men avoid it. Unfortunately the men best equipped to interpret adequately are sometimes so appalled by human incapacity to interpret satisfactorily that they deliberately seek to avoid interpreting, and the men who do it with assurance sometimes so little comprehend the perils that they are unsuited to do it at all.

Through their selection of facts, even recent historians, on some subjects, have maintained interpretations as opposite as those of their Northern and Southern ancestors of eighty years ago. For example, in 1939 two books on the slavery controversy appeared simultaneously, one by Dwight L. Dumond, born in Ohio, educated in the North, and professor in Ohio and Michigan, and the other by Arthur Y. Lloyd, born in Kentucky, educated in the South, and professor in a Kentucky teachers' college. Dumond wrote with a sympathy for the anti slavery cause that might have pleased an abolitionist, and Lloyd with an animosity toward it that would have done credit to a pro-slavery Southerner of 1861. Similarly in their 1939 debate over Lincoln's election, Arthur C. Cole, born in Michigan, educated entirely in the North, and professor in Northern universities, and J. G. de Rouillac Hamilton, born in North Carolina, educated in the South except for his Ph.D. training at Columbia, and long time professor at the University of North Carolina, looked at the same facts and reached the same diverse conclusions as their fellow sectionalists in 1861. Cole maintained that Lincoln was moderate and the South had nothing to fear from his election so far as slavery in the states was concerned, whereas Hamilton insisted that Lincoln was radical on the slavery issue and there was "every indication" that overt "aggression against slavery" was forestalled only by secession. Implicit in Cole's discussion was a belief that slavery was wrong, and he explicitly stated that the "doom of slavery . . . was sealed . . . by the social and economic forces" of nineteenth century America. Implicit in Hamilton's reply was condemnation of Northerners who opposed slavery. Cole made obvious his disapproval of ante bellum Southern institutions and Hamilton his dislike of ante bellum Northern critics of the South.

Secondly arises the problem of relating the underlying forces to specific events. Are the series of dramatic episodes, sometimes labeled "immediate causes," that preceded the Civil War "causes," or are they merely surface manifestations of underlying forces? Did they in themselves affect history or are they merely incidents in the unfolding of more significant phenomena that did?

Thirdly, what is the relationship of the sectional conflict to the War? Can the two be separated? If war need not have arisen from sectional conflict, then which forces were the causes of the conflict and which of the War, and what bearing does one set of causes have on the other?

Fourthly, what influence did the actors who dominated the ante bellum scene exert upon these historic forces and events?

The answers to these questions in histories of the Civil War, whether implicit or expressed, depend upon the background and training of the writers, upon the time and place in which they lived and wrote, and upon their philosophies of history and of life or their lack of any conscious philosophies.

I

Conspiracy of selfish or wicked men under what one might call the "devil theory" of history—was once widely accredited, particularly in the period from 1861 to 1900, as a cause of the Civil War. Indeed, some writers have called it "*the cause*." But there are Southern "devils" and Northern "devils," and this conspiracy hypothesis has two faces.

Southern writers describe an aggressive North determined to destroy the South and its institutions. Chief among the offenders, of course, were the abolitionists bent on stirring up servile insurrection and encouraging slaves to escape. The peace of the Union was disturbed by the fanaticism of the abolition attack; forces in the South that might require apology are explained as part of the South's reaction to the unreasoning outburst against it, and may therefore be blamed upon the abolitionists. Important factors that brought on the War were: the *Liberator*; anti-slavery societies; irritating activities of the anti-slavery forces in Congress led by John Quincy Adams and Joshua Giddings in the 'thirties and 'forties; the organized flood of abolition petitions; formation of the Free-Soil Party; efforts to deprive the South of its just gains in the settling of Texas and winning the Mexican War; the persistent reappearance of the Wilmot Proviso; machinations of the New England Emigrant Aid Society; John Brown's activities in Kansas including the "Pottawatomie massacre"; Northern refusal to admit Kansas under the Lecompton Constitution; free state men's refusal to obey the Fugitive Slave Act; successful work of the Underground Railway; personal liberty laws and slave rescues; attacks on the slave trade and slavery in the District of Columbia; anti-Southern activities of anti-slavery clergy, speakers, and press; charges that Southern institutions and Southerners themselves were evil; organization of the Republicans as a sectional party bent on ruining and then ruling the South; Republicans' espousal of the anti-slavery cause; their circulation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Helper's *Impending Crisis*; attacks of Chase, Seward, and Sumner in Congress; Northern refusal to accept the Dred Scott Decision; reputed Republican intention to destroy slavery in the states; the North's greed for power and determination to aggrandize itself; Lincoln's "radical" anti-slavery, anti-Southern attitudes; Lincoln's election with all it implied in Southern minds; Republican defeat of compromise efforts; attempts to provision Sumter; and Republican determination to "coerce" Southern states. According to this theory, Northerners were persistently aggressive against a South that loved the Union and merely wished to be let alone with proper respect, under the Constitution, for its local institutions. Repeatedly the North violated the Constitution, broke its promises, and repudiated compromise agreements. Northerners were guilty of hypocrisy and sophistry. The phrases "Black Republicans" and "abolitionists," loosely applied, symbolize the attitude of this school of writers.

Unprovoked Northern attack, they maintain, forced the South first to secede, and later to fight purely in self defense

A Northern counterpart of this explanation portrays a conspiracy of slaveholders determined to rule the Union or break it. The plot had been laid long before the War and the conspirators included men in high national offices who used those offices to further their schemes of overthrowing the Constitution they were sworn to serve. The conspirators' aim was, of course, to force the nation to accept slavery and to protect slavery by national power, not only in Southern states but in all territories, and ultimately in Northern states as well. According to the "slaveholders' conspiracy" theory the factors that brought war were much like those named above but with a reverse emphasis. They included: constant attacks on anti slavery men; the gag resolution by which Congress for a time refused to receive petitions; the effort to censure venerable John Quincy Adams because of his "courageous stand" for "democratic principles"; pro-slavery agitation in Congress; exclusion of free discussion of slavery in the South, violence or threats of violence against antislavery advocates in the South, and acts like driving Judge Hoar, official representative of Massachusetts, from South Carolina; plotting to add to slave area by annexation of Texas and by war with Mexico, coupled with failure to insist upon American claims in Oregon, which would be free territory; later efforts to extend slavery by acquisition of tropical possessions; use of the nation's foreign service for pro slavery ends; attempts to win the national territories for slavery, exemplified in Calhoun's stand on the constitutional position of slavery in the territories; the plotting of Douglas and pro slavery senators to pass the Kansas-Nebraska Act and repeal the Missouri Compromise, activities of Missourians in Kansas, Buford's organized effort to capture Kansas for slavery, and acts of violence like the "sack of Lawrence"; Buchanan's pro-Southern policy in Kansas and elsewhere including his effort to foist the Lecompton Constitution upon free Kansas; the Dred Scott Decision, described as a conspiracy of slaveholders, Supreme Court, and President; imposition of the obnoxious Fugitive Slave Act upon an unwilling North; kidnaping of free Negroes; smuggling slaves into America and efforts to legalize the foreign slave trade; propagation of pro slavery arguments and attacks on "free" institutions by Southern clergy, speakers, and press; substitution of a pro slavery bloc for the old national parties; determination to entrench slavery and federal protection for it in the Constitution; the position of Davis, Atchison, and other pro slavery men in Congress; the Nashville Convention of 1850 and repeated efforts of Rhett, Ruffin, Yancey, and others to break up the Union; the slavery bred habituation of Southerners to the use of violence, their brandishing of weapons and threats of duels in Congress, and the attack upon Sumner with subsequent lionizing of Brooks for it; Southerners' scheming to split the Democratic

Party at Charleston in 1860 in order to insure Lincoln's election so as to force secession on unwilling Southern Unionists; long continued control of the federal government by Southerners with the aid of their Northern allies and use of that power to settle issues in their own favor to the injury of the North; the slavocracy's determination to hold on to this power or to destroy the Union when they could no longer control it in short, to rule or ruin; desire of Southern leaders to secede rather than compromise in 1860-1861 and extremists' clever demands intended to defeat compromise while pretending to support it; attack on the Union through secession; seizing of federal properties; and, finally, the firing on Sumter. The attitude of upholders of this view is indicated by their frequent use of "fire-eaters," "slavocracy," "rebels," and, for Northern accomplices, "doughfaces." They charge Southerners with cant and hypocrisy. The North went to war, they say, to defend the Union and the Constitution against unprovoked attack, after repeated violations of the Constitution, breaking of promises, and repudiation of compromise agreements.

Both North and South were flooded with this type of history for years after the War. James G. Blaine, Horace Greeley, John A. Logan, and Henry Wilson were good examples of Northern writers of this type. In 1886 Theodore Roosevelt wrote of the "reckless ambition" of Southern leaders and classed Jefferson Davis with Benedict Arnold. As late as 1904 he still condemned Davis as a traitor. One of the earliest and perhaps the most effective of Southern exponents of the conspiracy view was Edward A. Pollard who put out the first version of his history in 1862. Subsequently, he softened his asperity, but he continued to deny that slavery caused the War and he repeated the charges of Northern aggression in each re-writing. Among numerous Southerners appeared in 1866 one vigorous Northern expounder of the "Northern conspiracy" view. He was Rushmore G. Horton, campaign biographer of Buchanan in 1856, ardent Democrat, and wartime Copperhead. His history, which sold 75,000 copies, was published by Van Evrie, Horton and Company of New York, who also sponsored "anti abolition tracts."

A second generation finally dropped the sectional bitterness and partisanship sufficiently to produce from about 1890 to 1920 a number of histories in which the authors attempted to see the points of view of both regions. This period saw the appearance of the works of James Schouler, James Ford Rhodes, John B. McMaster, and Southerners of the Dunning school. These writers were still influenced by their parents' feelings sufficiently to understand their own section better than the rival one. They still exhibited unconscious biases, but they were trying hard to ferret out and overcome them. They did abandon the terms "rebel" and "Black Republican" and ceased to talk about abolitionists' and slaveholders' con-

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spiracies. Northerners stopped speaking of the "War of the Rebellion" and some Southerners began dropping "War between the States." Northerners commenced to pay tribute to the character of Lee, Stephens, and Davis. The Southern picture of Lincoln was redrawn.

Contrary to the general trend, occasional recent examples of reversion to the early "devil theory" have appeared. In 1925 two Texans republished Rushmore G. Horton's work of 1866 with its vigorous expounding of Northern aggression and added a dedication to "Copperheads of the North . . . who refused to bow the knee to the *Beel* of commercial and imperialized aggression." And as late as 1941 Frank L. Owsley described as the cause of the War "the egocentric, the destructive, the evil, the malignant type of sectionalism" of the North and "the abuse and villification" with which "the moral and intellectual leaders of the North" attacked "slavery and the entire structure of southern society." "Indeed," Owsley averred ". . . neither Dr. Goebbels nor Virginio Gayda nor Stalin's propaganda agents have as yet been able to plumb the depths of vulgarity and obscenity reached . . . by . . . abolitionists of note."

Yet many of the new generation of historians of the nineteen-twenties and nineteen-thirties in both North and South have produced histories nearly free from even unconscious sectional patriotism. It required a world war, the passage of sixty years, and the rise of a third generation that for the most part had not known veterans of either army to escape the war bred conviction that war came through opponents' conspiracy and wickedness. Occasional telltale phases or inherited attitudes that unmistakably reveal a Northern or a Southern upbringing do crop out. The greater part of this new generation, however, in both sections, have ceased to concern themselves with "blame" for the War and justification of their ancestors and have turned instead to other approaches.

II

As the years passed an increasing number of historians saw the War not as a conspiracy of one group but as a struggle between two groups with irreconcilable interests. It was not until the eighteen nineties that Frederick Jackson Turner popularized the word "sectional." Yet much earlier than that the War was interpreted as a quarrel between two rival regions. The terms, however, in which the clash of sections is described have changed time after time.

In the first generation, Southerners interpreted the controversy in terms of constitutional theory and Northerners in terms of conflicting moral standards. Between 1861 and 1900, Southerners, particularly leaders in the losing cause, wrote histories and memoirs seeking to justify their own course by maintaining that they fought to protect constitutional principles. The War as described by these men was a contest over types

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of government. Republicans sought to establish a highly centralized national regime exercising vast powers. Southerners stood firmly on a retention of power in the states where they insisted the framers had meant it to be and where it was the more safely and wisely exercised. A parallel was drawn between the eleven Southern states in 1861 and the thirteen colonies in 1776, both acting on the motive of protecting themselves against oppression. This view denied slavery as a major cause of war and stressed instead the menace of concentration of power in the central government. In his *Constitutional View of the Late War between the States* in 1868 Alexander H. Stephens, while admitting that 'slavery so called,' was the "occasion" or "main exciting proximate cause" of the War, insisted it was "not the real cause." In two huge works, he sought to prove that Northern violation of Southern constitutional rights brought on the War and to establish the soundness of the Southern view on state rights and the compact theory of the Constitution. In his *Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government* in 1881 and his *Short History of the Confederate States of America* in 1890, Jefferson Davis, too, argued that slavery was "in no wise the cause of the conflict, but only an incident." It was Northern destruction of the Union as established by the fathers, he contended, and Northern violation of constitutional guarantees that forced Southerners reluctantly to withdraw from a compact, already broken, in which there was no longer safety for them. Both Stephens and Davis defended the right of secession.

Then, as a profession of trained historians arose in the 'eighties and 'nineties a generation of scholars interested in political and constitutional problems assumed leadership and further emphasized constitutional issues. For example, Hermann E. von Holst, though primarily concerned with the slavery issue, called his work a "constitutional" history and devoted considerable space to discussion of the constitutional aspect of the conflict. Of this group, however, John W. Burgess was the dean. His *Middle Period* in 1897 and his *Civil War and the Constitution* in 1901 constituted a masterly attack on the position so painstakingly presented by Stephens and Davis. Burgess maintained that the Southern doctrines of state sovereignty and secession were supported neither by sound constitutional theory nor by "sound political science" and he blamed Southern leaders for the War. Burgess's Tennessee birth and background might have led one to expect him to agree with Stephens and Davis, but he had happened to come from the strongly Unionist portion of Tennessee and he had served in the Union Army. Subsequent training in a German university then had intensified and given scholarly backing for his youthful devotion to nationalism.

In Northern histories during this period from 1861 to 1900, slavery as a moral issue played the role that loyalty to the compact theory and

state rights did among Southerners as an explanation of the sectional clash. For a generation or two after the War most Northern writers talked of the "irrepressible conflict" between freedom and slavery. Slavery had been planted in the Constitution, so this version ran, but Northerners came to realize that it was contrary to the principles of American democracy and had to be extirpated. First the abolitionists and then more moderate men became aroused over the evil nature of the institution and the wickedness of men who wou'd profit by slavery. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, contact with fugitive slaves political agitation of the subject, and clerical denunciation of human bondage finally aroused the Northern conscience to a determination to prevent its extension and as speedily as possible to destroy slavery itself. Only thus could the national conscience be cleared. Southern defense of slavery as a positive good with supporting Biblical authority for it merely intensified the North's conviction of its own r ghteousness. Just as early Southern historians condemned abolitionists as fanatics, so these Northern writers praised them as moral crusaders. The great exponents of the moral conflict view were men like Blaine, Greeley, Giddings, and Wilson, who had participated in the conflict, and late nineteenth century historians like Draper, von Holst, Alexander Johnston, Rhodes, and Schouler; Albert Bushnell Hart, Henry W. El son, and numerous other later men long accepted their interpretation and continued to expound it. These men pointed to the stressing of slavery in resolutions of secession conventions as Southern proof of their contention that slavery caused the War.

About the turn of the century, the emphasis began to change. Nearly everyone in every period had stressed the importance of the abolition campaign if only as an irritant to Southerners and conservative Northerners, but following World War I a generation of historians impressed with the importance of economic motivation came to deny that slavery as a moral issue was an important cause of the War. Charles and Mary Beard led the way. Others accepted this rejection of moral motivation until, in the nineteen-thirties, Gilbert H Barnes and Dwight L Dumond restudied the anti slavery movement and came to the conclusion that the moral issue of slavery and the abolitionist propaganda were after all important. Barnes abandoned the narrow focus of William Lloyd Garrison, but he showed how objection to slavery on moral grounds, as part of a larger religious movement, reached thousands of Northerners and exerted greater influence than his immediate predecessors had admitted. He described the steps by which the religious impulse of the day was translated into the anti-slavery movement and then was broadened into a general crusade against the South. Though Owsley has quarreled with Dumond's restatement of the old thesis, Charles W. Ramsdell Avery •. Craven, and other recent writers have acknowledged the anti-slavery impulse, in this

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broader religious enthusiasm that Barnes described, as one facet of a complexity of causes of the War.

Slavery described in terms other than morality has continued important in historical interpretation. Thus the slavery controversy has been variously pictured as a rivalry of political systems and of men aspiring to public office, as a struggle of political philosophies for supremacy in the nation, as a conflict of competing social systems each endangering the other, and as a clash of economic interests. Some have stressed the mutual jealousy of two labor systems and have said the quarrel arose because both the slaveowner on the one hand and the nonslaveholding farmer and wage-earner on the other feared the effect of the rival labor system upon his own. In 1939 Roger W. Shugg insisted that Louisianians did fight to defend slavery as a necessary police system that "assured social and political dominance to all white people" and as a provider of "cheap labor for planters" that "exempted them from manual work, and afforded a comfortable way of living."

However they have interpreted slavery, most historians have agreed that westward expansion precipitated a crisis in the sectional conflict. Over the status of slavery on the trans Missouri frontier and in foreign territory that Americans annexed or coveted came the clash. There compromise proved impossible. So most histories have described as important in the coming of war the acquisition of Louisiana, Texas, California, and New Mexico and subsequent efforts to acquire tropical lands, and also the Missouri Compromise, the Compromise of 1850, Douglas's popular sovereignty campaign, the struggle over Kansas, the Dred Scott Decision, Douglas's Freeport Doctrine, and the inability of compromisers who could settle everything else to agree upon what to do about slavery in the territories. Some have felt the compromises were futile. Others have believed that the Kansas-Nebraska Act's abandonment of the old compromise solutions made war inevitable. Some have denounced Calhoun for precipitating the issue in irreconcilable form. Others have blamed later Southern extremists, or antislavery Republicans like Chase, Seward, and Sumner, or Douglas's ambition or Buchanan's ineptitude, or Taney, or Lincoln, or Davis for setting in motion forces that made the territorial problem insoluble. Still others have said the conflict in the territories had been irreconcilable from the first acquisition of land in Louisiana. Many Northern writers have agreed with Lincoln that the struggle would have gone on until the land was all free or all slave and that the trend until 1860 was toward the country's becoming all slave, and have felt that this tendency made war necessary. Southern writers who have denounced Lincoln because his "house divided" speech indicated a determination to destroy slavery everywhere have still justified Southern secession, either on the ground that slavery to exist required federal protection as a right in

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all the territories, or else because slavery had to expand to survive. Indeed, Calhoun in the debates of 1836 and 1837 had said about what Lincoln did in his "house divided" speech.

Frederick Jackson Turner and followers of his, such as Walter P. Webb, might really be set apart from Northern and Southern historians alike in their stressing of frontier influences upon the slavery issue. Turner thought it was the Western "area for expansion which gave the slavery issue its significance in American history." By 1840, Western settlers had occupied most of the best land east of the ninety eight degree meridian. West of that line inadequate rainfall rendered agriculture difficult as practiced by either slaveholders or nonslaveholding farmers. Scarcity of adequately watered, unoccupied land, consequently forced both free soil and slave states into a competitive struggle over room for expansion elsewhere. Thus, Western conditions, historians of the West have urged, intensified the sectional controversy back East.

All agree it was over the quarrel about territories and new possessions that efforts at peaceful solution within the Union broke down in 1860-1861.

III

Since World War I historians have tended to shift emphasis from conspiracy, state rights arguments, and slavery, all three, and to talk in terms of broader political, economic, or social conflict. This does not mean that earlier writers failed to see economic and social issues or that recent writers have discarded slavery, as causes of war. Simply the emphasis has changed.

In a period when courses in civilization and histories of civilization and studies of cultures have become popular, some writers talk of the Civil War as a collision of civilizations or cultures. Historians as different as Frank L. Owsley in 1930 and Thomas C. Cochran in 1942 have portrayed the clash in cultural patterns. But culture and civilization are large terms. There are more specific explanations.

One is a stressing of the spirit of nationalism. This historic force, powerful all over the western world, took possession of North and South in different degrees. Western development and Northern economic interest and growth created practical conditions that gave many Northerners a sense of American nationality lacking in the South. Hence Webster's appeal, itself influenced by these forces struck response in the North but left the South cold. The South, for its part, was divided among men like the mountain Unionists loyal to an American nationality, other men like Davis himself strongly influenced by nationalism but in whom it assumed an aggressively Southern form, and still others untouched by and opposed to this nineteenth century phenomenon in either its American or its Southern form. On the whole, in spite of particularists who dissented in

both North and South, the War became a contest of nationalisms, a Southern and an American variety. Pollard emphasized this in 1867. Channing tried to express it in his title, "The War for Southern Independence" Harry J. Carman, Jesse T. Carpenter, Robert S. Cotterill, Benjamin B. Kendrick and Alex M. Arnett, Samuel E. Morison and Henry S. Commager, Henry T. Shanks, and Nathaniel W. Stephenson have pointed to this fact of separate Southern nationality.

Some writers have found seeds of war in the wide differences between the social systems of North and South. To them slavery was essentially a manner of organizing society. Southerners felt that a social order based on a slave class at the bottom provided the greatest stability and happiness for workers and upper classes alike. It created leisure that permitted development of leadership and culture. Southerners blessed with this "superior" social system were contemptuous of democratic Northerners and Northerners in turn were jealous of the "superiority" of Southerners they encountered in the national capital. Consequently clashes occurred. Northern historians have emphasized rather the merits of social democracy and the evils that an aristocratic system entailed for the vast majority who were not great planters. In any case, here was a struggle between aristocracy and democracy, with ante-bellum Southerners convinced of the social idealism of the slave system and a youthful social democracy in the North belligerently proclaiming a new day for the common man. Even had Southerners become convinced that slavery was undesirable as a social system- or economically unprofitable still, under any system but slavery, the social problem of handling Negroes who were not only slaves but members of another race and densely ignorant would have been stupendous. Harvey Wish has analyzed George Fitzhugh's conviction that "the universal paternalism of an ordered society" provided by slavery was "the only practical alternative to world wide communism." The world had to choose, Fitzhugh believed, between "the security of the feudal ideal and the chaos of liberalism." Herbert Aptheker, after a detailed study of slave revolts, concluded that fear of slave insurrection influenced most phases of ante-bellum Southern history and that rebelliousness among Negro slaves was "exceedingly common" and did play a part in bringing on emancipation. Many historians have felt it was the social dread of free Negroes and the inability to see how blacks could be controlled socially or made to do labor effectively, if free, that created the insurmountable obstacle to all consideration of emancipation. Economics had little to do with defense of slavery, Morison and Commager have told us in a passage that did not appear in 1927 in the original *Oxford History* by Morison alone; "slavery was simply a social necessity for keeping the negro population in its proper place." Ulrich B. Phillips, indeed, called determination that the South should remain "a white man's country" the "central theme" of Southern history.

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Then there was the political phase of the conflict. Politics was important ~~per se~~. Initially the national parties, strong in both sections, had helped bind the Union together. Each party had sought issues that would elect candidates dependent upon votes in both sections and had avoided issues that would weaken either its Northern or Southern wing. The break up of these old national parties and the emergence of a purely sectional Republican Party were ominous. Republican gains in 1856 and 1858 and the split in the Democratic Party paved the way for war. Some writers, as has been pointed out, have believed the final cleavage of the Democratic Party was engineered by Southern extremists who hoped in this way to insure Douglas's defeat and thereby to acquire, in Lincoln's election, a weapon with which they could coerce reluctant fellow Southerners into secession. In any case, the Lincoln election is accredited by most historians as the immediate cause of secession, sometimes because of what it really implied for the South, sometimes because of what Southerners believed it implied.

Maintenance of the balance of power in the United States Senate, now hopelessly destroyed, had long been deemed essential by Southern leaders. Northerners, on the other hand, had always resented the extra power and "rotten boroughs" created for Southern white men by the three fifths rule.

Political ambition of individuals has been described as a cause of dissension. For instance, an aggregation of disappointed office seekers united to form the Republican Party; repudiated Southerners used extremist doctrines to stage comebacks. Rivalry of Buchanan and Douglas, neither of them anti-slavery men, contributed to the disruption of the Democratic Party. Some have seen in secession a brave plunge to attain freedom from political oppression that awaited Southerners within the Union; but others have adjudged it bad sportsmanship in defeat, revealing determination to retain the power and emoluments outside the Union that Southerners had now lost within it. Unhappiness over seeing patronage within Southern states taken away from those long accustomed to dispense favors played its part and some writers feel that Douglass's election was as much feared on this score as Lincoln's.

The slavery issue itself, other historians have maintained, was mainly a focus for attack on political enemies. Northern politicians employed it to overthrow and Southerners to sustain Southern political power. Cotterill believed Southern secessionists used "the anti-slavery menace as a bogie man" to frighten Southerners into accepting an already arranged program. Some historians have contended that the issue of slavery in the territories was not really of practical importance to either North or South: climate barred slavery anyway; Kansas never had any slaves to speak of; and, when they had the power just before the War to frame territorial acts as they pleased, Northerners imposed no Wilmot Proviso.

on Colorado, Nevada, or Dakota. Indeed, Ramsdell in 1929 contended that by 1860 slavery had reached its natural frontiers. "There was . . . no further place for it to go." Hence "there was no longer any basis for excited sectional controversy over slavery extension." If these views are correct, mere prestige and "sectional honor," on the one hand, and desire of politicians to make political capital, on the other, stirred up the dispute over territories. According to one view, settlement of the conflict in Kansas and unsuitability of the remaining territories to slavery embarrassed the Republicans by depriving them of their only issue and forced them to seek issues in more radical stands. Then again the Republican refusal to accept compromise in 1860, which many writers have felt plunged the nation into war, was necessitated by purely political considerations. Yielding on the territorial issue, however wise it might have been, would, this thesis runs, have destroyed the Republican Party by violating its chief campaign pledge and destroying its *raison d'être*.

Several historians have pointed out that the election of 1860 failed to register the wishes of the people, who in both sections were overwhelmingly opposed to extreme measures. Shugg has described how in Louisiana the minority of slaveholders that did favor secession were able to overrule a majority that were opposed or indifferent, not through conspiracy, but by exercise of powers they had always possessed in a planter and commercial oligarchy. The Beards called attention, too, to the balance of power that a small group of extreme anti-slavery men held at given times and places in crucial Northern elections. In Louisiana Shugg found politics confused in 1860 by the tendency of influential men to follow national leaders on the basis of old loyalties that had little to do with current issues. Recently, Craven has maintained that the election was fought within each section on local issues irrelevant to the major national problem.

Rival political theories, too, have been suggested as a cause. The North represented political democracy and the South an aristocracy in which a small group of large slaveholders held the power. Stephenson emphasized this rivalry of democracy and aristocracy. Dodd pictured a struggle for "the rights of men" represented by Lincoln "as against the rights of property" represented by Davis. War came, Dodd felt, out of an irritating disparity between "healthy moral, even radical, forces" of Northern democracy and a South that "no longer believed in democracy." Here was the old fight between popular rights and political privilege for the "rich and well born." Burgess in 1897 wrote of a conflict between the Northern ideals of progress and the perfectibility of man and a pessimistic Southern view that only a few men are intelligent or good and hence all others must be subjected to rule by the few. Historians friendly to the South have argued that the South stood for the principle of protection of a minority against tyranny of the majority, for which Calhoun tried to provide a

philosophy and a formula. When this protection became impossible inside the Union, the discontented minority, exercising its basic political right of selfdetermination, separated from the majority.

Several recent writers have spoken of the Civil War as revolution. To some this term means an unsuccessful effort of Southerners to change our political system into one where the minority rules. The Beards and like minded writers since the 'twenties have seen, rather, a successful revolution in which a Northern industrial group seized power from an agrarian group that had long held it. The Beards have pointed out that this is none the less political revolution because the opposed economic interest groups were separated by geographic instead of class lines.

IV

Certainly one of the most fundamental revisions of Civil War history was made in the 'twenties by historians who followed the Beards' lead in interpreting the Civil War as an economic conflict. The period subsequent to the appearance of Charles Beard's revolutionary *Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* in 1913 saw a whole school of economic interpretation arise, dominate the scene for a decade or two, and then recede from its ascendancy to a place along side other schools of interpretation, not, however, without leaving an indelible mark on Civil War historiography and on most other areas of historical research. To be sure, this emphasis on economic motivation was not new. Madison in the *Federalist* gave classic expression to it years before Marx was born, and Marx with a different slant and greater stress upon dogma long antedated Beard. Indeed, Jefferson Davis in Senate debate had very nearly stated the Beardian thesis. Others had pointed out the economic conflict without employing the Beards' concept of a revolution: James Spence in 1862, Edward A. Pollard in 1862 and 1867, Jefferson Davis in 1881, Alexander Johnston in 1885, John A. Logan in 1886, John M. Harrell in 1899, Henry W. Elson in 1904, W. Birkbeck Wood and J. E. Edmonds in 1905, George S. Merriam in 1906, John H. Latané in 1910, and Emerson D. Fite in 1911.

In his significant but often overlooked *Social Forces in American History* in 1911, Algie M. Simons had presented a well developed economic interpretation of history two years before Beard's more famous book appeared. As early as 1903, moreover, in an almost unknown essay, *Class Struggles in America*, Simons had published a brief and oversimplified interpretation of the Civil War that suggested the conflict of economic groups later described by the Beards and the economic interpretationists of the 'twenties. Simons said the War resulted from class antagonisms between North and South. The Emancipation Proclamation was "simply a war measure." Abolitionism was important chiefly because it made Western farmers and

Eastern wageearners believe they had an interest in the struggle between capitalists and slaveholders. "In any society the exploiting class must control the government if its exploitation is to continue." Hence the Southerner was right in assuming that, if he lost control of the government, there "was no hope for him except in secession and the formation of a government which he could control." "The Civil War," Simons concluded, "was simply a struggle by the capitalist class of the North to maintain the ruling position not only over the North but over the South as well."

Nevertheless, it was under the influence of Charles and Mary Beard that economic interpretation burst into full flower. According to this school, the Civil War arose from a new phase of the old conflict between business and agriculture. With the coming of the industrial revolution to America a new industrialism arose beside the older commercial interest and finally superseded it as the rival of agrarianism. The new industrialism sought from the federal government aid that planter interests and Western farm interests opposed. So long as West and South stood together the new industrialism was powerless, though growing in strength. But, partly through the new economic ties created by railroad building of the 'fifties between Northeast and Northwest and partly by a political bargain Republican managers engineered between the elections of 1856 and 1860, a majority of Northwestern farmers were won to an alliance with Northeastern industrialists against their former allies in the agricultural South. In return for Western backing of a protective tariff, the Northeast agreed to support Western land policies that it had previously joined the Southeast in opposing. Both tariff and free homestead planks appeared in the Republican platform of 1860. The West had sought free homesteads on the frontier and internal improvements. Also, for years Northern business men had favored and Southern Democrats had opposed a national bank, "sound" money, federal support of business enterprise and New England fishing interests, ship subsidies, federal grants to railroads and other internal improvement projects, and tariff protection for American manufacturers. A Democratic Party dominated by able Southerners had for many years controlled the federal government and had thereby prevented enactment of these measures. The Census returns of 1850 showed the South foredoomed to ultimate defeat, convinced Southern leaders that they could not long continue their control within the Union, and made Northern leaders in turn exultant and uncompromising. Northern business was anxious to gain control of the government as soon as possible to enact laws supporting its ventures. Slavery was used as a point of attack with popular appeal, but the real basis for opposition to the slave power was economic. Secession and war came and, when the strife was over, Southern and Democratic power had been broken and Northern industrialism was in

the saddle. The United States had entered upon a long period of control of government by business with the industrialists' wishes enacted into law in place of the old planter views that had dominated ante bellum legislation. This was revolution.

It is interesting to find Southerners before the Civil War, on the one hand, and Blaine in 1884, on the other pointing out economic motivation represented in the North's tariff aims long before men of the nineteen-twenties were to stress it. Blaine, indeed, wrote in his *Twenty Years in Congress* that "large consideration must be given to the influence of the movement for Protection" in "reviewing the agencies" that "precipitated the political revolution of 1860." Interestingly, too in 1944 in their *Basic History of the United States*, the Beards omitted all mention of their "Second American Revolution" hypothesis of 1927 that had given them such far reaching influence on Civil War historiography. In describing the 'fifties they gave other than economic factors somewhat more relative importance than they had in 1927. Charles Beard wrote in 1933 a critical review of a book that avoided interpretation and attacked the author for believing that "impressionistic eclecticism is the only resort of contemporary scholarship." Yet writing in 1944 he and Mrs. Beard avoided all explicit interpretation of the coming of the Civil War. In spite of this reticence, the selection and arrangement of their facts make it obvious what they thought were the causes.

Economic forces were given added strength in the North, some historians have contended, by the Panic of 1857, which Northerners could attribute to the recently enacted lower tariff rates. Carman in 1934 and Hicks in 1937 pointed out that the Panic strengthened Southern extremists and left the North more hurt than the South. Channing writing in 1925 believed that the effects of the Panic injured the Democratic Party in the North. Hacker in 1910 and Hicks found that its effects made government aid to industry seem imperative. Craven has shown how Northerners blamed the South for Northern economic ills.

On the other hand, historians like the Beards, Channing, Cole, Cotterill, Craven, Phillips, Russell, Shanks, Sitterson, and Van Deusen have described the Southern side of the economic picture. Apparently and in comparison with its own past, the South was well off in the 'fifties, and yet Southerners were troubled. The North was growing alarmingly and, in population, wealth, and economic power, was far outstripping the South. Through the one-crop system and failure to do their own carrying and manufacturing, Southerners were paying Yankees for these services a disproportionate share of the returns on Southern agriculture. Forgetting that the actual tariff had been enacted by Southern votes and was lower than duties had been in three decades, the South's political spokesmen complained that the tariff drained Southern profits into Northern pockets. In reality, the

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South was worried less by existing conditions than by fear of what Republican control might do to the tariff in the future. Southern dependence on Northern capital led to a continuance of the old creditor-debtor controversy. The distribution of the nation's wealth between North and South was inequitable. In popular parlance, the South was tired of living in vassalage to the North; it was determined to cease being a colony of the Northern business empire. From the Civil War to the present this factor has been discussed, and as late as 1937 and 1942 has been particularly stressed by Walter P. Webb and Benjamin B. Kendrick respectively. Besides, much of the older South was suffering from soil exhaustion and competition with the virgin soil of Western plantations. Many Southerners felt that expansion of slavery into new regions was essential, and some favored reopening of the slave trade as a further remedy. Commercial conventions frequently met to study remedies but did little to follow up plentiful proposals made by convention speakers. The South tended to attribute its economic ills to Northerners, and extremists urged economic independence, obtainable they said, only after secession.

There was also a conflict in labor systems. Northern wage earners were afraid of the competition of slave labor. Many Northerners felt that the South was blocking national, meaning Northern, progress; that it was impeding the operation of Manifest Destiny, that is, the spread of Northern democracy and nonslaveholding farmers. Southern slaveholders, on the other hand were afraid of the effect upon their slaves of contact with free workers and free state farmers.

Besides the Beard school of economic interpretationists, there are the Marxists, James S. Allen, Herbert Aptheker, and Richard Ennale, and a one-time editor of the *Marxist Quarterly*, Louis M. Hacker. In the little they have written on causes of the Civil War, none of them has distorted historical reality to shape it to a preconceived Marxian mold as Du Bois did with the facts of Reconstruction. Allen and Hacker, both writing in 1937, presented about the same picture that the Beardians painted except that Allen and Hacker used somewhat different terms. For instance they, like Simons a generation earlier, spoke of a conflict between the slavocracy and *capitalists*. Aptheker insisted that "the anti slavery struggle broadened into a battle for democratic rights of white people" and that slaves frequently "received aid from white people, generally in the lower economic groups." Ennale in 1937 attempted to show the rudiments of a class struggle involving labor by pointing out that American labor played a part in the struggle against the slavocracy. He pictured the slavocracy as conducting a "counter revolution" and talked of a coalition of farmers and wage earners organized to crush it. He also pointed out that the First International and British labor supported the North. Charles Wesley, on the other hand, has shown that American labor was hostile toward

free Negroes in the North as well as in the South. Morison in 1927 and Stephenson in 1918 also called attention to participation of the American working class in overthrowing slavery but without seeing in this a "class struggle." Shugg contended that in Louisiana, in spite of many confusing factors, slaveholders tended to urge, and small farmers and city workers to oppose, secession. Ennale suggested an alliance between merchants and financiers in the North and slaveholders in the South. He was troubled because anti-war feeling had been strong among workers who should have supported the class struggle of the Civil War. He felt, however, that labor pacifism had not been spontaneous. It had been manufactured by pro-slavery mercantile interests who played on fears of workers that war would bring unemployment. Allen declared the War was "a revolution of a bourgeois democratic character, in which the bourgeoisie was fighting for power against the landed aristocracy" Long before these recent Marxists, Benjamin E. Green, a Southerner writing in 1872, had maintained that slavery elevated the common people of the South, had accused Northerners of monarchism, and had listed as a cause of the Civil War "the irrepressible desire of capital to cheapen labor."

In spite of the vogue of the economic interpretationists, Andrew C. McLaughlin of an older generation still believed in 1935 that slavery was the *chief* cause of the War. Morison alone in 1927 and together with Commager in 1942 maintained that it was the cause of secession. While not neglecting the economic conflict, Henry H. Simms felt in 1942 that "political and psychological rather than economic factors played the paramount role." And James G. Randall in 1937 and 1940 seriously questioned the validity of the whole economic interpretation.

V

The Negro's views on the Civil War would be interesting, but in their preoccupation with the history of their race, Negroes have written little on the larger aspects of American history. Frederick Douglass's autobiography published in 1882 puts him in the group that sees the War as a conspiracy of slaveholders. It is rabidly pro-Northern. George W. Williams in his *History of the Negro Race in America*, appearing the same year, wrote from a pro abolition point of view and treated the War as a struggle over the moral issue of slavery. He tried to explain why there were not more slave insurrections and included an interesting chapter on the role of the Northern free Negro in the anti-slavery movement. Charles Wesley in *Negro Labor in the United States* found slavery the major issue of the War, but pointed out that neither Northern labor nor Northern soldiers nor Southern slaves realized what "the real issue" was. In a detailed study of the failure of the Senate Committee to agree upon a compromise that might have prevented war in 1860-1861, Clinton E.

Knox decided in 1932 that responsibility for failure had to be shared jointly by Lincoln and the Republican Party. He came also to the conclusion that the real grievance of the South was not such concrete matters as loss of fugitive slaves or failure to obtain protection for slavery in the territories but "the hostile sentiment of the North toward slavery." He offered the comment that compromise was impossible because such a grievance could not be settled by "any human concessions" and since "popular sentiment" would eventually have risen again to overthrow any compromise made.

Unless one includes incidental material in Charles Wesley's *Collapse of the Confederacy*, the present author has found, even among works touching only briefly on the period, only one study by a Negro that is not focused entirely on the Negro. In an interpretive article of 1933, George W. Brown showed that some of the South's ablest leaders were secessionists, that a "rising sense of [Southern] nationalism" stimulated the South to dislike of Republican attacks on it, that the South was far from united and extremists had to work hard to "precipitate a revolution," and, finally, that only in the Gulf states was the opposition of a slave-based economic system to commercialization strong enough to persuade states to secession as a remedy. Both Wesley and Brown, when they do turn to general topics, so detach themselves from race bias that no one unacquainted with them would guess they are Negroes.

VI

Writers who feel that free choices of men were important have analyzed the part various leaders played in bringing on armed conflict, and old judgments of these leaders have been modified as war feeling has died out and scholarly researches have provided new understanding. Even Rhodes, in spite of his anti-slavery background and preponderant use of Northern sources, dealt more sympathetically with men whose cause he thought wrong than had earlier Northerners.

Decreasing sectional feeling and greater perspective have gradually won for John Quincy Adams, doggedly fighting for the cause of liberty in Congress, a rather more enviable reputation than either friends or foes gave him earlier. Calhoun, always great to Southern writers has grown in stature with the years. Northern writers have ceased denouncing him as the leader of a conspiracy. Historians of whatever point of view have come to recognize the greatness of his mind, his prophetic vision, the importance of his political philosophy. He is now usually pictured as a man devoted to the Union but also to the interests of his state and region, trying desperately to reconcile these conflicting loyalties by safeguarding slavery within the Union and by solving the problem of protection of minorities against majority tyranny. In short, he was trying not to destroy but to

save the Union by removing the conflict that would otherwise destroy it. Recent writers like Craven still make him share responsibility for bringing on war. But his motives and abilities are no longer questioned. Webster, too, has been exonerated, at least from the bitter charges of the *Ichabod* view of him, by restudy of his relation to the Compromise of 1850.

Fire-eaters and abolition leaders have lately been more critically treated than they were in earlier years by admiring fellow-enthusiasts, but yet more understandingly than early writers of the opposition found possible. Of all leaders of the period, however, the most unsympathetic handling by current writers has been reserved for these two groups and for certain anti-slavery political leaders like Chandler, Chase, Sumner, and Wade. Few historians have liked Sumner, but some have respected him for his ability and sincerity. In recent years Northerners have ceased praising Sumner's "courageous" verbal attack on the South, and denouncing Brooks's "cowardly" assault on him, and Southerners have stopped damning Sumner and lauding Brooks. Most historians, like some contemporaries in both North and South, have come pretty generally to regret the action of both men and to feel that both should bear heavy responsibility for making peaceful agreement more difficult. Yet, even today, most Southerners find it easier to understand Brooks and Northerners Sumner, so strong are cultural influences. The debate as to whether Sumner was really seriously injured or was shamming to get sympathy will have to await Laura A. White's biography for a possibly definitive answer.

Republican leaders were once all lumped together, but recent re-examination of their motives has tended to separate them into various categories of conservatism and radicalism. Attention to economic factors has revealed that, of Republican extremists, some were essentially conservative except for radical views on slavery based on a desire to serve their own economic aims, whereas others like Stevens and Julian were thoroughgoing social and economic radicals.

Davis long suffered at the hands of Northern historians and of Southern protagonists of his rivals and enemies. Gradually, however, scholarly research has made of him a not always wise and rarely lovable but still responsible statesman. He is pictured, not as a promoter of secession, but rather as a representative, in the late 'fifties at least, of a conservative group in the South. Strongly pro Southern, he none the less hoped, until almost the last, to avert secession by winning concessions within the Union.

Buchanan's indecision and ineptitude have generally been blamed for failure to stem in time the rising tide of secessionism, and some writers have felt that if Lincoln or Douglas could have entered the White House in November, 1860, the Union might have been saved without war. Yet George T. Curtis as early as 1883, Horatio King in 1895, and John

Bassett Moore in 1908 defended Buchanan. More recently Philip G. Auchampaugh in 1926, James G. Randall in 1937 and 1940, Frank W Klingberg in 1943, and Roy F. Nichols, as a result of yet unpublished researches, have carried his rehabilitation further. They have suggested that he was following a consistent and definite policy that might have succeeded and that, in any case, he more nearly represented the will of the people North and South than did Southern extremists or radical Republicans who criticized him. In 1942 David M. Potter restudied Seward and credited him, during Lincoln's "perilous silence" of November to March, with able leadership in efforts to save the Union by conciliation.

Some students of the period have blamed Douglas for breaking the peace and loosing in the Kansas Nebraska Act the forces that led to war. Rhodes in 1892 judged him severely. Historians have debated at length whether ambition for the presidency, concern for a Pacific railway to promote his own and his constituents' economic interests, use of him by Southerners cleverer than he, an honest desire to produce a formula for a permanent peace in the slavery feud, or just moral and political obtuseness explain his opening of Pandora's box. As men have attained greater freedom from wartime prejudices that led Confederates and Republicans alike to hate middle of the-road statesmanship, and as the evidence has been thoroughly examined and sifted, Douglas has been given new character credentials and a more significant place in history. Fiske and McMaster in 1902 and Burgess in 1897 partially defended him. So did Channing in 1925. The major task of rehabilitation, however, was performed by Frank H. Hodder from 1899 to 1936, by George Fort Milton in his *Eve of Conflict* in 1934, and by Avery Craven in several works published in the last six years.

Lincoln is still an enigma, subject to strong disagreement. The hatred expressed by early Southern writers is gone. So, too, among most serious historians, is the peculiar brand of hero-worship sponsored for political reasons by generations of Republican political writers. His claims to greatness after the War began seem little questioned today but do not concern us here. About his part in the coming of war, there is still controversy. Some see in Lincoln a statesman who perceived and gave popular voice to the fundamental issues of his day, a leader whose abilities brought the nation through crisis to preservation of the Union and elimination of slavery. Others, however, picture him in the ante bellum years as a skilful politician whose cleverness turned every situation to his own and his party's advantage. Milton, Craven, Mary Scrugham in 1921, and William E. Baringer in 1937 have stressed his shrewdness as a politician. Did his "house divided" speech call to the nation's attention a fundamental truth and set in motion a series of events that ultimately resolved the conflict in

favor of union and freedom instead of disunion and extension of slavery over the whole nation? Or did the speech merely call Abraham Lincoln to public attention in such a way as to put him finally in the White House and make war inevitable? Did his debates with Douglass clarify a great public issue that Douglas was beclouding and thereby lead to saving the Union? Or did Lincoln in these debates merely win for himself the presidency at the expense of precipitating a bloody war that Douglas as president might have avoided without loss to the nation? Did Lincoln's refusal to sanction compromise in December, 1860, save the country from further conflict over slavery in new territories to be acquired and preserve the Union from ultimate disruption or subjection to the rule of slaveholders made powerful through expansion? Or did it merely precipitate a war that could otherwise have been avoided without destruction of the Union? And what of Lincoln's attitude on Sumter? Answers to most of these questions have differed according to each author's point of view and his judgment of basic human values.

VII

Yet a few other reasons given for the coming of war need mentioning. One is conflict between a romanticism that characterized the South and a practicality or materialism of the North. Differences in manners, even failure to understand each other's conception of a "gentleman," led to misunderstanding. In 1862 William Taylor, a Californian living in London, ascribed the War to Divine intervention. In his *Cause and Probable Results of the Civil War in America*, Taylor declared that the War was brought by God as "a severe chastisement of the American nation for national sins," as discipline "in the school of adversity" so that the nation might attain "humble permanent greatness," and as a means to the "providential end" of overthrowing slavery.

A number of writers have pointed to the suppression of civil liberties in the South as a cause of the War. The threat to civil liberties aroused many Northerners who themselves disliked antislavery men but were alarmed at the attack on fundamental American rights. Important, too, these authors have felt, was the effect upon the South of shutting off the possibility of criticizing slavery, since only through criticism and discussion of the merits and evils of slavery could the South itself have solved from within the slavery problem, thus removing the possibility of war from that source.

Historians seeking causes of the War and recognizing the differences between North and South, have sought reasons why North and South became so different. Contrasts in climate, soil, and other geographic factors are one explanation popular with historians whom Ellen Churchill Semple and Frederick Jackson Turner have made conscious of the in-

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fluence of geography upon history Peculiar adaptability of staple crops to Southern soil and climate and of Negro labor to the growing of staples, coupled with the rich return from staple production and the ready supply of African Negroes, led in colonial days to a development of Southern people and life distinct from those of the North. Even before the nation was founded, many differences grew up between the colonists in the two regions. The industrial revolution is another factor that has appealed to writers interested in economic motivation. It brought the South the cotton gin, enlarged markets for its staple crops, and surpluses of capital in industrial areas for loans to promote Southern expansion. On the other hand, it brought industrialism to the North. Hence it increased the dissimilarity of the sections.

Racism has had its exponents. Hinton Rowan Helper, writing soon after the War, expressed it in an extreme form. It appears, too, in George Fitzhugh's late writings. "It is a gross mistake," said Fitzhugh in 1861, "to suppose that abolition alone is the cause of dissension. . . . The Cavaliers, Jacobites, and Huguenots who settled the South, naturally hate, contemn, and despise the Puritans who settled the North. The former are master races, the latter, a slave race, the descendants of the Saxon serfs. The former are Mediterranean races, descendants of the Romans. . . . The Saxons and Angles, the ancestors of the Yankees, came from the cold and marshy regions of the North; where man is little more than a cold-blooded, amphibious biped." Indeed, Wish, Fitzhugh's recent biographer, believes that Fitzhugh's ideal "system" "belongs within the ideological orbit of contemporary Fascism" "From Fitzhugh to Mussolini," says Wish "the step is startlingly brief."

In 1923 a Virginian with a Johns Hopkins Ph.D. presented a racist doctrine of the origin of sectional differences interesting indeed in the year when an unsuccessful Putsch first brought Hitler and his creed of racial superiority to the world's attention. According to Hamilton J. Eckenrode, the Nordic race, distinguished by "predominance in war and political capacity, together with love of adventure," had become "tropicalized" in the Lower South where "the natural relationship is that of master and servant." The Southern Nordic had lost "northern respectability and idealism, . . . sounness, hardness, avarice." He had gained "towering race pride and an inclination to ride over racial groups considered inferior" He was "recovering his primeval character, . . . reverting to the type of masterful man which had imposed its will so long on the world." "The Southerner was a type as yet new in history: he was the one real creation of America." He felt "revulsion for the mechanistic, egalitarian North." "This change in the Nordic race . . . in the hot lands of America, unhampered by European restraints," was the "main cause of the Civil War." The War was "a struggle between that part of

the Nordic race which was prepared to renounce its tradition of mastery for equality, modernism and material comfort and that part of the race which was resolved, despite modernity, to remain true to its ruling instincts”

Most authors have not written so explicitly as Eckenrode, but racism is implicit in the writings of numerous historians dealing with this period. In some it takes a form that the sociologist calls Anglo Saxonism, somewhat less extravagant than the Nordicism of Eckenrode; in others it appears in a more general form as belief in racial superiority of whites. It is implicit, for example, in the writings of historians as various as Horton and Pollard in early days and Phillips more recently and affects their interpretation of history.

Various writers have called attention to differences in sectional characteristics that made it hard for Northerners and Southerners to get along with each other. For instance, in 1866 Horton spoke of the North's dangerous views and “traitorous desire to overthrow the free Government of the United States.” These attitudes he ascribed to British influence and to a carry-over of Tory principles of 1776, that had come down through John Adams to the Lincoln Republicans, who were merely carrying out in America “the British free negro policy.” William W. Handlin, in a book of 1864 published in Louisiana, pointed out the danger of votes in the hands of peoples who have not property and responsibility. In 1896 Edward Ingle spoke of the ante bellum fear of “the populating of the South by a no property class from the North.” Ann E. Snyder in 1890 found part of the trouble in an ante bellum North's jealousy of the “broad liberal, free . . . noble civilization” of the South, which, “narrow and lacking in breadth of judgment” as they were, Northerners “could not appreciate.” Numerous writers have suggested that the North's humanitarian reform impulse made Northerners difficult fellow countrymen. Some have indicated that “gentlemen” found it hard to cope with Northerners’ bad manners and their failure to respond to the requirements of a gentleman’s code of honor. Others have felt that the large foreign immigration to the North considerably increased Northern anti-slavery sentiment and Eckenrode said it increased sectional differences by weakening the Nordic strain in Northerners.

On the other hand, historians have pointed out qualities that made Southerners difficult. One was extreme sensitiveness to criticism. Von Holst spoke of the South’s “consciousness of weakness”; Cole and James Truslow Adams saw a Southern “inferiority complex”; Morison and Commager noted “a strong, emotional sense of insecurity.” Cotterill in 1936 maintained that, while many Northerners came to America to escape from persecution or oppression, most Southerners fled from nothing and consequently had no inferiority complex and therefore were aggressive. Ecken-

rode is proud of the aggressiveness they showed. Occasional writers through the years have called attention to Southerners' economic jealousy of the North. Dodd said the politicians and "to an extent, too, the South generally" were jealous of everything Northern. Intellectual backwardness, lack of education, illiteracy, and absence of the habit of reading or thinking have been severely credited to ante-bellum Southerners. Some writers have felt that Southerners' ideas about "chivalry" and their tendency to settle arguments by force were sources of trouble in relations with Northerners. More than one writer has spoken of the "madness" of Southern extremists. Gay and the poet Bryant in 1881 in their *Popular History of the United States* revealed perhaps more of their own sectional bias than of the character of Southerners when they described the North's dread of "the supremacy of an ill born, ill bred, uneducated, and brutal handful of slaveholders over a [Northern] people of a higher strain of blood, with centuries of gentle breeding, and a high degree of moral and intellectual cultivation behind them."

VIII

Historians have been baffled trying to decide why Southerners wanted to withdraw or thought they could succeed in leaving the Union. Southerners believed in the right of secession. They felt aggrieved. But why did they choose to exercise the right and why did they feel that secession would remove the grievance? Some writers point out a series of illusions that made chances of success seem more likely than they were. Thus Southerners believed that Northerners were unwilling to fight and would prove weak in warfare; they thought the Northwest needed the South as a market for its products and was dependent on whoever held the mouth of the Mississippi; they counted on Northwesterners of Southern origin to swing that contested section to the South's side or keep it neutral; and they were certain that Cotton was King and could command aid from European countries subject to its rule. Some historians have felt that the South was bluffing to gain concessions; others that she expected to remake a more happy union with abolitionists eliminated; still others that she thought she would have greater bargaining power outside than in the Union. Besides, there were the fears she entertained as to what would happen if she did not secede: that Southern Unionists would be controlled against former leaders of the South by Lincoln's or Douglas's patronage; that support of nonslaveholders would gradually be lost; that the Border States would abandon slavery; that her own sons would become free-soilers if they migrated into territories where there were no slaves. Too, she feared slave insurrection, injury from Republican rule, and uncertainty of her future if she stayed in the Union. Some have maintained she seceded to safeguard her property, or to protect her social system, or

to defend her liberties threatened by oppression. Others have insisted she left because only in that way could she retain actual prosperity or avert serious decline in it. Southern extremists dreamed of riches of a great slave empire when, freed from the North, the South could absorb territories to the southward. Obviously, motives varied. Lincoln's election signalled secession for some states. Other states left and many individuals took a stand for the Confederacy only after the firing on Sumter and Lincoln's call to arms forced them to side with South or North in an already existent war. Large numbers of Confederates went along only because, after war came, there was nothing else to do. Thus a majority of people, who loved the Union, were led by a minority to leave it.

IX

Secession would not have led to war except for the North. Northerners denied the right of secession. But why did they wish to prevent secession? Even when these questions are answered some historians feel they must still ask how and why war came. Under Buchanan, states had already announced their secession, had seized federal property, and had joined in creating a new Confederacy. Yet there was no war. And most people of both sections wanted peace and believed there wou'd be no war. How then did attempted secession and Northern denial of its validity lead under Lincoln to war that had not come under Buchanan?

The outbreak of fighting over Sumter, it has been generally agreed, consolidated behind their respective governments a Northern and a Southern people hitherto badly divided. Northern writers have tended even into recent times to say that the South precipitated this final break by ordering the firing on Sumter and have proceeded to debate whether this was the deliberate choice of responsible leaders or a rash decision of extremist subordinates who misinterpreted or deliberately exceeded their powers. Southerners have generally accredited Lincoln's attempt to provision Sumter with responsibility, and some have concluded that this action resulted rather from undue influence upon him by radicals in his party than from his independent initiative. Recently however, two other hypotheses have been championed.

The older one lays armed conflict at Sumter to Lincoln's own deliberate decision. Edward A. Pollard even as early as 1862, Samuel W. Crawford in 1887, Percy Greg in 1892, Clement A. Evans and James Schouler in 1899, and Mary Scrugham in 1921 suggested that Lincoln had calculatingly manoeuvred the South into striking the first blow. Channing worked out the hypothesis more elaborately but, with his usual caution, omitted this, like so many of his interesting spoken intuitions, from his printed volume. Edgar Lee Masters in 1931, Craven in 1936 and 1942, Carl Russell Fish in 1937, Milton in 1941, and Simms in 1942 have also

stated this view in one form or another. But it was Charles W. Ramsdell, entirely independently of Channing, who worked out a detailed statement and, with the added support of Browning's diary, which was unavailable to Channing, dared publish it. Though Randall, one of Lincoln's current biographers, has rejected it, many have accepted the Ramsdell interpretation. Ramsdell's thesis was briefly this: Lincoln felt bound by solemn oath to preserve the Union. He was convinced that this could be done only by armed victory over the South. If he did nothing the nation would disintegrate. If he took the initiative in using force, Northerners would not support him. He must somehow maneuver the South into armed attack that could be dramatized. So, against the judgment of most of his official advisers, he planned the provisioning of Sumter, conscious that whatever the outcome, he would gain his point. He kept the secret of his intent so well that only after seventy-five years did sufficient evidence come to light to justify a careful historian in charging Lincoln with deliberate provocation of war. The provisioning "failed," but Lincoln rejoiced to intimate that, as he foresaw, it had "succeeded" in its larger object of outmaneuvering the Confederates into striking the first blow and thereby consolidating for him Northern opinion behind a war most Northerners did not want.

Potter, after thorough searching of contemporaneous materials, offered a new explanation. Lincoln, Seward, and other responsible Republicans were eager, he maintained, to avoid war. Lincoln's failure to assume leadership between election and inauguration he considered unfortunate. As president, however, Lincoln pursued a definite policy. His "rejection of compromise did not mean the rejection of peace." If the Upper South could be kept in the Union, if both coercion and admission of the right of secession could be avoided, and if meantime the Republicans could demonstrate in practice that their administration did not endanger Southern institutions, then powerful Unionist forces in all the slave states would bring a voluntary reconstruction of the Union without compromising the question of slavery in the territories and without war. Some one symbol of federal authority must be maintained for the sake of national and Republican prestige. Pickens, however, would do as well as Sumter with less risk of precipitating war. Lincoln was ready therefore to yield Sumter if he could by evacuation keep Virginia in the Union, or he was ready to evacuate Sumter just to ease tension if he could keep Pickens. The unexpected exhaustion of Anderson's supplies and unanticipated failure to establish federal authority at Pickens before a decision had to be made at Sumter forced Lincoln's decision to provision Sumter. Even then, his notification of South Carolina and his promise not to enforce were meant to prevent, not to provoke, hostilities. According to Potter, aside from certain faults of loose administration,

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the "policy was executed with great skill." Lincoln failed to preserve the Union short of war without compromise chiefly because he and other Republicans overestimated Southern Unionism and failed from the first to take Southern secessionism seriously.

X

In the last two decades a series of questionings of the inevitability of war have led to a new revision. Indeed, as early as 1887 Percy Greg, an Englishman, doubted whether war need have come out of the sectional conflict, and in 1897 and 1901, while voicing his reprobation of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and John Brown's activities, Burgess expressed the same doubt. Except for these two, however, every writer the present author has found questioning the inevitability of the Civil War has written between the two twentieth century world wars. This timing may be accidental, but it seems to indicate that the feeling of disillusionment and futility after World War I may have affected attitudes toward wars in general. When Channing in 1925 raised the issue of needlessness of war, he restated the old view that slavery would have disappeared and that the South would have met economic ruin even without war. Ramedell pointed out in 1929 that slavery, "a cumbersome and expensive system," must shortly have begun to decline and would, from its own unprofitableness, have disappeared in a generation without the "frightful cost" of war. In 1932 Dodd pointed to the suppression of all "authoritative objection to the dangerous trend of the plantation system" by denying to "teachers and scholars the function of free criticism," and asserted that, except for this silencing of discussion, "one of the most cruel and most needless of wars" might have been avoided. Dumond, Max Farrand, Hicks, Milton, Russel, and Henry T. Schnittkind have also questioned whether war need have come.

It is, however, Avery O. Craven and James G. Randall who have developed a new revision out of this questioning. They began by asking: Was war inevitable? Was the conflict irrepressible? If war was needless, why did it come? If inevitable, at what point and for what reasons did it become so? Craven in an article of 1936, then Randall in a book of 1937, then Craven in books of 1939 and 1942 and Randall in three articles of 1940 answered elaborately that war was unnecessary. In support of this view they presented what might be called a psychological interpretation that ranks in importance with the earlier economic interpretation.

Neither Craven nor Randall ignores or neglects the various conflicts, cultural, social, economic, political, constitutional, philosophical, moral, that divided North and South in the eighteen fifties. Both are familiar with the influences that made the sections so different. Neither offers a blanket cause for the War. Indeed, both men, profiting by the work of

the many historians who have gone before, give able syntheses of all of these forces. To be sure, earlier writers, too, have recognized and described the excitements, passions, and fears of the period. Craven and Randall depart from previous explanations in ceasing to assume that because the two sections employed different labor systems and had developed different cultures, social systems, economic interests, political aims, constitutional theories, philosophies of life, and codes of morality along geographical lines they had necessarily to settle the resulting conflicts through war. They wonder why other serious and similar disputes between nations and between sections of the American nation were resolved short of war while the one of 1861 required four years of fighting to settle.

These new revisionists hold that, among the complex and manifold factors dividing North and South, it was psychological forces and not the nature of the issues themselves that brought on war. Emotional considerations such as hatred and other passions, reformers' zeal, fanaticism, intolerance of things distasteful or different pride, sectional "honor," crimination and recrimination, religious enthusiasm, and a sense of mission controlled both sections. Lack of proper means of intercommunication intensified ignorance. Southerners failed to distinguish mild anti-slavery men from abolitionists. Northerners took isolated episodes and conditions and generalized them into exaggerated pictures of the slave system. Each section misunderstood the other. Increasing excitement prevented rational processes from functioning. A majority of sane men in both sections were swept aside and silenced. Agitators in both regions, clergymen, editors, speakers, politicians seeking personal advantage, all joined to whip up emotions. Overbold leaders went further than they originally intended. In Congress, fire eaters' threats and vituperation of Sumner and his anti-slavery fellows, boasts, insults, fisticuffs, calls to duels, brandished pistols a caning and language so insulting as to provoke a caning, were not conducive to calm solutions of social and economic differences. Sectional honor and pride often required actions that carried no concrete advantage to either rival, sometimes injury to both. For instance, there was no real issue in the "irreconcilable conflict" in the territories, for, with all the victories over anti-slavery men the South could imagine, slavery would not have been profitable in the territories that remained to be settled, and the North needed no Wilmot provisos to exclude it.

Slavery was used as a point of attack or defense by every demagogue. Under its cloak, tariff, internal improvements, ship subsidies, banking policies could be fought over. The words "slavery" and "anti-slavery" became symbols. "Slave power," "Bully Brooks," "Uncle Tom," "Black Republicans," "Bleeding Kansas" became slogans of high emotional power. Craven shows how these phrases were used as abstractions that gave

moral value to local material needs of both sections, and how slavery was used as an arouser of passions that made all issues hard to settle. "All contests became part of the eternal struggle between right and wrong" Citizens with social or economic grievances of a local nature sublimated those grievances into hatred, not of the local forces responsible, but of the rival section of the country, which was blamed for all these ills So a "blundering generation" stumbled over its emotions into needless war about a "repressible conflict."

XI

In conclusion a few generalizations are pertinent:

1. This study has illustrated the difficulty and danger of all generalizing about historians or about history. In spite of an already great caution about generalization, the present author, before he began his study, would have made, from his knowledge of a few outstanding historians several simple generalizations with a feeling that those, at least, were justified. After thorough reading of most that has been said about the causes of the Civil War, he hesitates to generalize at all, for he has discovered that history writing falls into no *simple* chronological or ideological pattern, if indeed into any pattern. Hence, these few generalizations are offered with tentativeness and humility.

2. No "new" interpretation is really new or unique. (a) Every idea the author had thought a contribution of recent historical scholarship, he found in one or several nineteenth century historians. Indeed, every explanation of the War presented by historians with the benefit of hindsight, even the Beardian thesis and the recent Craven-Randall explanation, was comprehended and stated before the War occurred. (b) Few of the points of view historians present can be attributed to a single person's influence. There were always several people who voiced them who had almost certainly not got them from each other or from one common originator

3. Historians have generally failed to make several distinctions that would be helpful. (a) Most of them, even recent writers, have mixed fundamental forces and trivial incidents rather indiscriminately without proper evaluation. (b) Rarely have they differentiated underlying from immediate causes (c) Only a few have distinguished causes of the sectional conflict from causes of secession, or either from causes of the War. (d) Even fewer have explicitly faced the question whether the men whose activities they all discuss really influenced history at all. Most historians have given no hint whether choices of men or impersonal determinisms, economic or otherwise, brought on the Civil War, or, if both were important, how they were related.

4. Standards of writing history were affected by the War. (a) For several decades after 1865 in histories on both sides, the extreme views of

ante bellum days were given by war the sanction of orthodoxy, whereas the saner, more moderate views held by the majority in both sections before the resort to arms were discredited by war and hence by historians. (b) On various historical questions military victory made the victor's views correct and invalidated the contentions of the vanquished. Not only the Supreme Court but many historians accepted this verdict of armed force, instead of applying the criteria of history in reaching historical decisions. (c) Because war left the South seriously weakened, the victorious North produced for a generation most of the history that was not sheer apology of defeated leaders, and hence, temporarily and outside the South at least, established historically its views of the conflict. (d) War stimulated patriotic fervor and the prestige of victory led Northerners to feel in the post bellum era that history fair to the defeated South was unsound. Similarly, the need for bolstering hurt pride and an inability to admit even partial responsibility for the tragedy war had brought upon the defeated South led Southerners to regard special pleading as sound history. Then, at length, in reaction against earlier biases, some younger historians of both sections, contrary to general trends, began in the nineteen twenties and nineteen-thirties to lean over backward in criticism of their own section's ante bellum past. Certain reviewers have come to praise a Southerner who condemns Southern, and a Northerner who condemns Northern leaders or attitudes and to charge with bias one who defends his own section's past without applying criteria of fair mindedness or "objectivity" that would prevail in other fields of history. A war of eighty years ago still affects historical standards.

5. Perhaps no historian fully escapes his background. In the case of the Civil War, peculiarly persistent sectional feelings and traditions about that conflict have given the historian's early environment a particularly telling influence. (a) Even in recent times, most historians have been affected consciously or unconsciously by a Northern or Southern background or a reaction against one or the other, by an internal conflict of both influences, by a leaning over backward to avoid unfairness that in turn becomes partiality in reverse, or by the enthusiasm of a convert to an adopted sectional allegiance. Occasionally, special factors such as Burgess's origin in a Unionist fragment of the South or Horton's Copperheadism have complicated the effects of sectionalism. Many historians have degenerated into mere sectional apologists. Very few have attained or fallen heir to complete detachment from geographic or traditional influences. (b) Two authors of equal honesty, sincerity, and scholarly training, each believing he has been completely "objective," may use the same historical material to arrive at diametrically opposed statements of what each believes is historic "fact." This is possible in dealing with such matters as judgments about individual men, analyses of popular opinion or human

motives, evaluations of the pro Northern, middle of-the-road, or pro-Southern point of view, or assessments of the importance of the North's and the South's grievances against each other. It is possible, too, in weighing anti- and pro-slavery contentions about territories, deciding how much of a threat to the South Lincoln's election was, or determining the reasonableness or wisdom of secession or prevention of it. It happens where a choice in emphasis must be made between human rights of the Negro or well-being of the small farmer or free wage-earner, on the one hand, and, on the other, protection of property in slaves or solution of the social problem inherent in the free Negro in Southern society. Even the historian who tries to avoid interpretation must exercise subjective judgment in choosing and emphasizing his facts. Hence even in "objective" history, the historian's own attitude toward the place of the Negro in human society, toward the relative importance of property and human rights, or toward the desirability of an agrarian or an urban way of life becomes significant, as does his belief in or distrust of democracy or aristocracy. So, too, do accidents in his education, the mores under which he grew up, his contact with or isolation from ways of doing and thinking different from those of his own locality, his own devotion to or rebellion against what he has known, his preference for maintaining the status quo or seeking an improved society, his own social and economic status, his personal happiness or unhappiness, his grandfather's defeat or victory in civil war eighty years ago. All these factors subtly but profoundly influence history writing, since historians are all human beings as well as scholars. (c) Textbook writers and their publishers with an eye on sales, have frequently yielded to public opinion in one or both sections by including some items and omitting others, not because of historical soundness or importance but because they would please or offend sectional patriots. Sometimes publishers have sought favor in both sections by suggesting that an author from one section associate with himself a co-author from the other. At other times separate texts have been published for the two sections. (d) The Northern and Southern biases, pronounced in the first generation, grew milder in a second generation farther from the War, and weaker still in third and fourth generations, but have usually persisted, except where conflicting loyalties cancel each other out or confuse the picture. (e) The same historian has sometimes changed his interpretation or emphasis over a period of years as did the Beards between their histories of 1927 and 1944, Hacker between the time when he was an editor of the *Marxist Quarterly* and the present, and Randall between his book of 1937 and his articles of 1940.

6. Several groups that might have been expected to present particular points of view have displayed no peculiar bias in treating the causes of the Civil War. (a) Southern agrarians have written much as other

Southerners have (b) Marxists have not here molded history into dogmatic patterns as they have in dealing with Reconstruction. (c) Few Negroes have dealt with the subject, but the writing of those who have is often indistinguishable from that of their white fellows. (d) No great foreign historian, if Von Holst is classed as an American, has made a first hand study of the causes of the Civil War. Foreigners who have discussed the subject have been free from some of the unconscious biases of American writers, but have usually accepted the interpretations, and often the philosophy, too, of Northern or Southern writers of their time. For example, Percy Greg, writing for Englishmen in 1887, pretty closely followed the "Northern aggression" view of contemporary Southerners. (e) The present author was unable to discover any marked correlation between Ph.D. degrees or university professorships and fairmindedness. "Trained historians" have produced a good deal of unbiased history, but they have also provided striking examples of prejudice.

7. Historians have found the causes of the Civil War bafflingly complex. No simple explanation is possible. Early writers found simple answers more satisfying than have later ones. The tendency has been from simple explanations to many-sided ones until recently the picture has become complicated indeed.

8. Still, in spite of this complexity and of numerous exceptions to the prevailing trend, successive periods have seen successive hypotheses receive special emphasis. (a) The "conspiracy" explanations of a rival North and South appear most commonly in the decades just after the War when wartime emotions were still strong. They have become rarer in the twentieth century. (b) In this same first generation, 1861-1890, the constitutional conflict was stressed, for the most part by Southerners who remembered and tried to justify Southern contentions in *ante bellum* political debates, though also by Von Holst, an immigrant. Between about 1890 and World War I, constitutional and political factors seemed important to scholars of *both* sections. Perhaps this emphasis resulted from the domination of public life by sectional jealousies and party politics in that period before men had become aware of the importance of contemporary economic developments. Since World War I, few have felt that the constitutional issue was of prime importance, though one of the latest writers, Simms in 1942, does stress the political conflict. (c) Slavery as a moral issue was usually emphasized by late nineteenth century Northerners still under the influence of *antebellum* humanitarians. It ceased to seem important to writers in the early decades of the twentieth century, but was revived by Barnes and Dumond in the nineteen-thirties. Among twentieth century writers, under the spell of material prosperity and economic determinism, reformers and moral issues have gone decidedly out of favor. Recently, historians have been inclined to look critically

upon "agitators" of causes, whom nineteenth century writers often admired. (d) Economic interpretation developed under Beard's leadership from 1913 until the early 'thirties. This was the period when men had become conscious of the power of "big business" and when progressivism of the two Roosevelts, La Follette, and Wilson had arisen to protect men against that power. So far as the history of the Civil War was concerned in the late 'thirties the economic interpretation waned in influence and fell back to take its place beside several other emphases. (e) Later, at a time when men were feeling the futility of one world war and facing the possibility of another, a psychological interpretation was sponsored by men persuaded that the sectional conflict could have been solved by other means than war, if emotional forces had not made the use of reason difficult. Writers of this view emphasize more than do others the causes of war as distinct from the causes of conflict. In showing that sectional conflict was turned into war because emotion overcame reason, they still have not shown why emotions rather than reason prevailed, and hence still have not presented a final answer. (f) Textbook writers usually have lagged behind other historical writers in accepting new points of view. (g) Individual historians have provided occasional surprises. For instance, Blaine stressed economic forces long before the economic interpretation school arose. So, too, Henry Adams and Edward Pollard in 1861 and 1862, almost contemporaneously with the events they described, wrote with some heat and much bias, but considerable insight. And Edward Channing provincial Bostonian and conservative as he was, emphasized in his ivory tower many of the economic motives and psychological factors generally not stressed until after he published his volume, and even then chiefly by historians with whom no one would have suspected Channing of agreeing.

9. Historians of this war have failed to deal adequately with the relation of individual men to the coming of war and the problem of human blundering as a cause of war. Randall spoke of "the blundering generation" but his and Craven's emphasis was upon group emotions rather than individual men's decisions. Numerous studies of leaders have been written. Ramsdell and Potter have raised and sought to answer questions about Lincoln's role prior to the firing on Sumter. For the most part, however, historians of this period who have studied individual men have been preoccupied with justifying, rehabilitating, or unmaking individual reputations rather than with the basic problem of the influence of leadership and the blundering of leaders that David Lloyd George, Sidney B. Fay, and George P. Gooch, for instance, stressed in the causation of World War I. Perhaps the relative decline of economic determinism in recent historical interpretation and the importance popularly ascribed to leadership, good and bad, on both sides in World War II may lead to a new probing of the Civil War period for light on the role of leadership in

bringing on that conflict. In any case, the two-fold problem still awaits study and an answer: (a) How important were individual actors as opposed to impersonal forces and (b) to what extent were avoidable human blunders a cause of this war? Were individual men responsible or did inexorable forces bring war and were the men merely puppets of these forces? Could different actions or decisions of men have prevented it? If men made the War, then what men and through what decisions and what actions? Which men could have prevented the War and when and how? In short, was this war the end result of interacting determinisms or did the free will of free men and their blunders in exercising that free will influence its coming and the time of its coming?

10. Study of what historians have said were the causes of this particular war makes one skeptical of all simple explanations of all wars. The fact that early historians were so sure that this war was fought over the moral issue of slavery, for high constitutional principles, or as a matter of self-defense against an aggressive opponent, and that later historians have largely discarded these simple and high-principled "causes" raises questions about other wars in other times and places. Indeed, the fact that nearly all happenings of the 'fifties and all differences between North and South have been discussed as causes of the War, warrants wondering whether one could not accumulate equally impressive causes of wars that never occurred; it arouses speculation whether an equally impressive list of likenesses between North and South and reasons why war could not occur between them might not be compiled out of the same 'fifties. In short, one comes away from such a study inquiring with Channing, Craven, Dodd, Ramsdell, and Randall whether war need have come at all, except for human blundering, and whether, since it did come, the great social forces or "fundamental causes," or in their turn the more recently stressed psychological forces, really explain its coming.

11. Conclusions about this particular historical problem have been constantly changing ever since the events occurred, as available data and men's environment, techniques, and philosophies have changed. Particular theses have been discarded or modified. Emphases have shifted. Almost certainly men's conclusions will continue to change in the years ahead with resulting revisions of anything written now.

12. This study has encouraged the present writer, however, to believe that the repeated efforts to discover the "truth" about causes of the Civil War have been fruitful and that both the methods and the quality of history have improved in the period analyzed. (a) Limitations inherent in a study of human activities prevent the historian's becoming an exact scientist in the sense in which the physicist or biologist is a scientist. The historian is limited by the accident of survival of materials. He is handicapped by the vaults of observation of the man who preserved the record.

He cannot check his conclusions by experiment; human motives and attitudes cannot be measured as can heat or heart beats. Still, this study indicates that the acquisition of "scientific tools," the more systematic sifting and evaluating of evidence, and the constant striving toward never-fully-obtainable objectivity or fairmindedness have brought us closer than we were to a clear and true picture of the causes of the Civil War. Growing recognition of the complexity of the causes of human action and of the problems of history would seem to suggest, if an analogy with the biological sciences is pertinent, a decided step forward. The recording of history is thousands of years old, but, with a few rare exceptions, American historians have employed the "scientific tools" only in the last sixty to seventy years. The fault, indeed, is not so much in the meagerness of accomplishment as in the grandeur of expectation. Actually, constant seeking for explanations of the War, digging out new materials, and presenting even soon-to-be modified conclusions have been decidedly worth the time and trouble, for these efforts, in combination, have gradually created the more complex, yet clearer and more nearly accurate picture of today. (b) Increasing recognition of the degree to which an historian's personal point of view affects his history has led to greater efforts to analyze and control, or at least avow, the subjectivity of the writer. In much of the writing on the Civil War there has been little correlation between claims to objectivity and freedom from prejudice. Heralded "objectivity" has too often turned out to be mere unawareness of individual prejudice or else an unwitting reflection of the prevailing prejudice of the period or region. Freedom from a point of view is not often possible; consciousness of one is. Happily, consciousness of points of view is more common than formerly. This study has furnished some evidence that writers with a determined philosophy of life of which they are fully conscious and which they make clear to the reader stand a better chance of approaching "objectivity" than did the older writers who, if they used "scientific tools," thought themselves completely "objective."

13. In view of the manifold difficulties in attaining objectivity, the impossibility of finding answers of scientific exactitude to questions about the history of human activities and motivations, the disparities among conclusions of the most diligent and honest workers, and the constantly shifting kaleidoscope of hypotheses about the causes of the Civil War, it is pertinent to ask whether so much study of a detail of history is defensible. The present writer, after making this analysis, believes with renewed conviction that it is. Though caution and full awareness of the dangers even in unconscious distorting of history to support current views are essential, still, if one approaches it humbly, with a desire to learn rather than to bolster already held theses, knowledge of history can teach this or any generation a great deal about itself and its problems. Ap-

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proached with speculative capacity and some cognizance of potential analogies, a concentrated study of a small fragment of the past such as the causes of an American civil war may add to the student's wisdom, not only about the causes of that war but about the causes of all wars; indeed, about human motives and human actions in any time or place. Study of the past, therefore, may increase the individual's capacity to meet current problems intelligently. Multiplied manifold this individual capacity could help society as a whole to avoid repeating mistakes of past generations and to plan for a better future. This purpose probably is better served by historians and students who, with due caution and humility, do attempt to interpret and explain the past than by those who merely catalogue what happened.

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